



Whitburn Church of England School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134512
LEA South Tyneside
Inspection number 282586
Inspection dates 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005
Reporting inspector Peter Harris

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Nicholas Avenue
School category	Voluntary aided		Whitburn
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		SR6 7EX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 5293712
Number on roll	940	Fax number	0191 5295569
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Cllr Shirley Stratford
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Miss Paula Williams

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	Inspection number 282586
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Whitburn Church of England School is an 11 to 16 mixed school situated in the village of Whitburn. The school changed its status in 2004 to become a Church of England voluntary aided school. It has slightly fewer pupils than most other schools but it is a popular school and growing, with pupils drawn from many primary schools. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic origin is much lower than average; pupils whose first language is not English is very low. Compared with schools nationally it has a lower proportion of girls and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need is lower than average and those who have additional learning needs is also lower.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Whitburn Church of England School is an outstanding school. It evaluated its achievement, and what it provides, as outstanding; the inspectors agree. It is a school with high expectations of pupils and staff and this is reflected in pupils' achievement. It is also a school which includes all pupils in its work, and where the care of pupils is outstanding. A great strength of the school is that it adds to the achievements of all pupils very successfully and they make outstanding progress. They also develop very well as young people through the opportunities which are provided and which they take. Pupils very much enjoy being at school. Parents too have positive views about the quality of education and care provided. Examination results are well above the national average at Key Stage 3. They are above average at Key Stage 4 and have been rising over recent years. Overall, the teaching and learning in lessons are outstanding, teaching is well planned and pupils are productively involved in their work. The school is led and managed in an inspired and systematic way by the headteacher, with an unremitting attention to high quality, and she is very well supported by her staff. As a result the issues from the last inspection have been tackled and there has been significant improvement in the school as a whole. The school knows itself very well through its system of school review. It has identified the few subjects where what is delivered and achieved needs to get better and is acting to improve them. Although the school has now reached a high standard in its quality it has the capacity to improve further. The school provides outstanding value for money, making the most of the resources it has available to improve what it provides for all pupils.

not applicable

What the school should do to improve further

This outstanding school has no major areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress. Overall, pupils join the school with above average attainment and the great strength of the school is that it adds very significantly to what all groups of pupils achieve between all key stages. In 2004, the school was ranked as one of the top performing schools nationally when measured by the value it added to its pupils' achievements. Both boys and girls who have attained very well before they joined the school, and those of average attainment, and those who attained below the standard expected, all make outstanding progress and add greatly to their achievements. Compared with the national picture, lower attaining boys progress very well, pupils who had not achieved the expected standard on joining the school often reach it by the end of Key Stage 3 and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also make exceptional progress.

Standards have been rising steadily for the past five years in national test results and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) results. Standards achieved in Key Stage 3 in 2004 and 2005 in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average, with a higher proportion than nationally attaining the higher levels. In 2004 and in 2005 GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils with five or more higher grades is above average. In 2004 all but one of the pupils attained a GCSE grade, and in 2005 all pupils attained a GCSE grade. Boys do as well as girls, and nearly all of the pupils who attained five or more higher grades, attained a higher grade in English and mathematics. In 2005 all pupils obtained a GCSE grade in English, the result of careful monitoring of the progress of pupils individually. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils meet challenging targets which reflect outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. In the few subjects where GCSE performance is not as high as could be expected, the school has a systematic and energetic approach to improve what is achieved by subject departments.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being of pupils, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils enjoy their education very much as shown by their good and improving attendance. They participate enthusiastically in all the school offers, including the extensive extra-curricular programme, which has improved significantly since the last inspection. This makes a significant contribution to ensuring pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive and their behaviour, exemplary. Adults set very high expectations for pupils that are clearly communicated to them. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them and respond appropriately in their learning and behaviour. Relationships between teachers and with other pupils are very warm and respectful. This has fostered an environment where pupils feel safe and well supported, by staff and one another and so achieve very well. Help and support for pupils experiencing difficulties are extensive and very effective so that all pupils are enabled to make outstanding progress in both their academic work and personal development.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and the sense of community spirit is a significant strength. They take on responsibilities willingly and maturely, including acting as prefects and contributing to the school council. If there is bullying it is dealt with effectively, and pupils know where to go to get help. Views of pupils are valued highly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding overall. Relationships between teachers and pupils are based on high expectations. Pupils' very positive attitudes and their enthusiasm contribute greatly to their learning.

Planning of lesson activities and use of learning resources are of a high quality, and lessons effectively meet the needs of different groups of pupils. The teaching is well paced with clear objectives and pupils often have opportunities to work independently and to solve problems; they respond very well to these.

Learning support and inclusion assistants are deployed very effectively to ensure all pupils make progress, and they make a significant contribution to the improvements made by pupils.

The school monitors the achievement of different groups of pupils extremely effectively. A wide range of assessment data is used to group pupils and to measure their progress. There are also key assessment events for pupils which are delivered with care and include feedback to pupils. There are also useful opportunities for pupils to assess their own work to aid their progress. Marking of pupils' work is often detailed and helpful.

In the few instances where the school has identified that teaching falls below its lesson quality standard it has put in place additional observation of lessons and other actions designed to bring about improvement.

Teachers are very well supported. Maintaining high standards for their pupils, and building on them, is a main focus of the staff training programme and there is a very strong culture across the school of improving the quality of teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. There is extensive support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and care is taken to ensure all pupils are included in provision suitable for their needs. In Key Stage 4, an alternative curriculum and vocational courses are available at a local college. The school also provides vocational GCSE courses. These developments provide opportunities to follow a wider range of qualifications and broaden options for potential employment.

Links are well established with local industry and the community. There is a whole school Enterprise day and business activities elsewhere in the curriculum. Work experience is provided for all pupils; careers education is included in the curriculum in Key Stage 3. Most pupils have successfully developed the skills, attitudes and qualities valued in the workplace. They have high standards in numeracy and literacy and are well placed to secure employment. There is also effective support for pupils who need to develop these skills to help them become economically independent.

A very wide range of unusual enrichment activities is offered; they are valued by the pupils and most participate in them. This programme makes an important contribution to team work, standards and a healthy lifestyle.

Transition from primary school is handled with great care, supported by a well designed programme. The school initiated and leads the local consortium of schools in its work on transfer from primary schools, and also takes a lead in the arrangements to ensure pupils make a well managed transition to post-16 education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support provided is outstanding. This is centred on ensuring the specific needs of every child are quickly identified, and thoughtfully developed individual programmes are established and delivered. This enables pupils to reach challenging academic targets and to make significant progress in their personal development. The work of the inclusion support team makes an influential contribution to the school's success in this area, but its success is underpinned by a very strong and supportive ethos, reflected in the commitment of all staff to ensure every child matters in every aspect of school. This is strengthened by the very good relationships the school has fostered with parents and external support agencies which ensure continuity of care and guidance, and pupils are well informed about their future options. Health and safety is taken very seriously and assessment of risk and other arrangements to ensure pupils are kept safe are extremely thorough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides inspirational and incisive leadership which gives emphatic direction for improvement, and the school has improved under her leadership significantly since the last inspection. She and her senior staff are unremittingly committed to ensuring the school continues to improve and have very effective systems to bring this about.

The school knows itself very well. It is skilled in the use of data and uses it very precisely to identify underperformance and to plan in detail what is needed to bring about improvement; this is followed by well targeted actions.

The school improvement process works very well. The School Improvement Board meets regularly. It drives the whole school approach, measuring what is achieved against the school's quality standards. Through the school's innovative system of ongoing self-evaluation, areas for improvement are clearly identified. It is an inspirational approach for staff; it involves them and empowers them because it is rooted in the quality of what is being experienced in the classroom by pupils. They relate very well to this and participate in the approach, regarding it as professionally challenging and worthwhile. Departmental teams, pastoral and support teams and individual teachers respond very well to their responsibility to assess their contribution and to act to improve it. An important element of the school review process is regular

observation of the quality of teaching and learning by middle managers who play the crucial role in this, assisted by senior managers. Teachers are clear about their performance and what has to be done to improve.

Parents' views of the school are positive. The school commissioned a parents' and pupils' survey and has made very good use of it. Its findings have been carefully analysed, areas of concern have been investigated and action taken.

Governors are well organised, wholly committed to the school, and fulfil their statutory duties. They are very well informed and debate the school's quality and outcomes. Governors have contributed well to the self-evaluation process. They are fully involved in budgeting. By ensuring that school resources are used efficiently they have helped the school to achieve outstanding value for money. The school has made savings and then reinvested deliberately in the inclusion team to support vulnerable and other pupils.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 0207 421 6800
F 0207 421 6707
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Whitburn Church of England School
Nicholas Avenue
Whitburn
SR6 7EX

24 November 2005

Dear Pupils

I and my inspector colleagues wish to thank you for your help during the inspection of your school on 23 and 24 November. You gave time to talk to us and showed us your work. We appreciated the straightforward way you gave your views on the school and your experience of it.

We enjoyed visiting your school and thought it was outstanding in what it provides and in what it achieves. There are no major areas where your school needs to improve.

You told us you enjoyed coming to school and you recognised that the teachers are working hard to help you. We found the teaching and learning in lessons is very carefully prepared and delivered and that it helps you a great deal to understand and to make progress, and that you respond with enthusiasm to your lessons.

We know that many of you arrive in the school with high standards. The school knows this and they are very successful in helping you to add greatly to your achievements and to achieve high standards. The school also works hard and is very successful in helping those of you who need to, to improve your standards.

It is a school that values everyone and is very serious about supporting and taking care of you. It looks after you very well and encourages you to have a healthy lifestyle and participate in its very wide range of activities. You appreciate the range and number of activities the school offers. You also feel safe and know where to go to get help if you needed to.

You are developing very well as confident and capable young people and the school can take credit for that, but so can you. You are very well behaved in classrooms, in assembly and around the school. The very high standard of behaviour from you helps your teachers to concentrate on doing their best for you and helps you to make outstanding progress in your lessons.

The very high quality of the school is the result of it being very well led by your headteacher and her senior staff. They know the school very well and are constantly trying to improve it. They have been successful and the school has continued to make significant improvements in all aspects of its work.

Thank you again for your help and we wish you continued success and happiness in your time at your school.

Peter Harris

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools